

1401 Airport Parkway, Ste. 230 - Cheyenne, WY 82001 - (307)-635-0331

February 3, 2023

The Honorable Cynthia Lummis 124 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20002

Dear Senator Lummis:

Subject: Proposed Legislation to Revise the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended

The Wyoming Mining Association (WMA) is an industry association representing mining companies, contractors, vendors, suppliers and consultants in the State of Wyoming. Among its mining industry members are uranium recovery licensees, including conventional and in-situ uranium recovery operators, several companies planning new uranium recovery operations and several companies conducting final reclamation/groundwater restoration operations. Wyoming accounts for between 30 and 40 percent of the total uranium concentrate production in the United States.

The Association has recently become aware via a letter prepared by the Uranium Producers of America (UPA) of a company proposal to amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended by revising some definitions contained therein.

Foremost, it must be noted that the company in question is a valued member of WMA's associate organization, the Mining Associates of Wyoming. We appreciate the work they are doing and want them to succeed. WMA's concerns are with the implications associated with amending the Act. WMA believes that the definitions in the Act should not be changed and that any such change would have broad impacts, potential unintended consequences and would be detrimental to the uranium recovery industry. The following are the WMA's reasons why the Act should not be amended.

Definitions potentially impacted in the Act and dependent regulation

The Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended contains the following two (2) key definitions that directly impact the uranium recovery industry in this country:

• Byproduct material (Partial definition):

"The term "byproduct material" means— (1) any radioactive material (except special nuclear material) yielded in or made radioactive by exposure to the radiation incident to the process of producing or utilizing special nuclear material; (2) the tailings or wastes produced by the extraction or concentration of uranium or thorium from any ore processed primarily for its source material content,..."

Source material

"The term "source material" means (1) uranium, thorium, or any other material which is determined by the Commission pursuant to the provisions of section 61 to be source material; or (2) ores containing one or more of the foregoing materials, in such concentration as the Commission may by regulation determine from time to time."

Source: U.S. NRC - NUREG-0980 Vol. 1, No. 11 Nuclear Regulatory Legislation 113 Congress; 2 Session - https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1536/ML15364A497.pdf#page=23

The definition of 11e.(2) byproduct dd not exist until it was added to the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended by the passage in 1978 of the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act (UMTRCA). Prior to the enactment of UMTRCA in 1978, the AEA did not regulate mill tailings, *per se*, with the result that numerous abandoned and

unregulated uranium mill tailings were scattered throughout the western United States. The main purpose of UMTRCA was to add a regulatory regime applicable to uranium mill tailings, so that there would never be any unregulated, abandoned or orphaned uranium mill tailings piles or wastes again in the United States.

UMTRCA did this by:

- amending the AEA by adding the definition of 11e.(2) byproduct material (i.e., tailings or wastes from the
 processing of any ores primarily for the recovery of source material, which includes mill tailings and
 underground impacts from ISR mining and other similar wastes) and requiring that all 11e.(2) byproduct
 material must be licensed as such;
- by adding Section 83 of the AEA, which requires that mill tailing sites must be transferred to the DOE (or a willing State) for long-term custody and maintenance after they are reclaimed;
- by adding reclamation requirements and the requirement to post a surety to cover the cost full cost of reclamation; and
- by adding Sections 84 and 275 of the AEA, which give the NRC broad authority to regulate the radiological and non-radiological aspects of mill tailings sites, in accordance with general standards promulgated by the EPA and specific regulatory requirements established by the NRC.

After a lengthy process, involving the preparation of a Final Environmental Impact Statement (the "FEIS"), EPA promulgated regulations (40 CFR Pat 192) setting the general standards applicable to 11e.(2) byproduct material, to ensure that 11e.(2) byproduct material is licensed and managed by NRC in a manner that is fully protective of public health and the environment. After another lengthy process, involving the preparation of a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (the "GEIS"), NRC promulgated its own regulations to implement the general standards set by EPA in 40 CFR Part 192. These regulations regarding mill tailings are incorporated in 10 CFR Part 40 Appendix A - Criteria Relating to the Operation of Uranium Mills and the Disposition of Tailings or Wastes Produced by the Extraction or Concentration of Source Material From Ores Processed Primarily for Their Source Material Content.

Under this regulatory regime, 11e.(2) byproduct material is regulated by NRC in accordance with very strict standards that implement similar or more stringent standards than apply to facilities regulated by EPA under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act ("RCRA"). As a result, and because it was important to Congress when enacting UMTRCA to avoid dual jurisdiction at uranium mill tailing sites, EPA exempted 11e.(2) byproduct material, along with Source Material and Special Nuclear Material from the definition of "Solid Material" under RCRA, thereby exempting 11e.(2) byproduct material, Source Material and Special Nuclear Material from the jurisdiction of EPA for the most part. Changes to definitions in the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended may jeopardize these exemptions.

These definitions and a supporting definition appear in the regulations derived from the Act (specifically 10 CFR Part 40) as follows:

- "Byproduct Material means the tailings or wastes produced by the extraction or concentration of uranium
 or thorium from any ore processed primarily for its source material content, including discrete surface
 wastes resulting from uranium solution extraction processes. Underground ore bodies depleted by such
 solution extraction operations do not constitute "byproduct material" within this definition."
- "Source Material means: (1) Uranium or thorium, or any combination thereof, in any physical or chemical form or (2) ores which contain by weight one-twentieth of one percent (0.05%) or more of: (i) Uranium, (ii) thorium or (iii) any combination thereof. Source material does not include special nuclear material."
- "Uranium Milling means any activity that results in the production of byproduct material as defined in this part".

Source: Code of Federal Regulations 10 CR Part 40 – Domestic Licensing of Source Material - https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/cfr/part040/index.html

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) provides the following additional definition:

- Ore
 - "Ore is a natural or native matter that may be mined and treated for the extraction of any of its constituents or any other matter from which source material is extracted in a licensed uranium or thorium mill."

Source: RIS 00-023: Recent Changes to Uranium Recovery Policy - https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/gen-comm/reg-issues/2000/ri00023.html

Changing the definitions of source or byproduct material in the Act would force changes in these definitions in the regulations, opening the proposed revised definitions to public comment that could be extensive, time consuming, and have an unpredictable outcome. Changes such as these could ultimately have a deleterious impact on the uranium recovery industry.

Broad impact of definitional changes

Changes to the definitions in the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended will have a broad impact that extends beyond the regulations of the NRC. These changes will impact the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Energy (DOE) regulations as well. The EPA's regulations also incorporate definitions derived from the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended. Specifically, 40 CFR 192.32 Definitions and Cross References and 40 CFR Part 61 Subpart W (40 CFR Part 61.251 Definitions) incorporate a definition of byproduct material based upon the one in the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended. The definition in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations states:

"Uranium byproduct material means the tailings or wastes produced by the extraction or concentration of
uranium from any ore processed primarily for its source material content. Ore bodies depleted by uranium
solution extraction operations and which remain underground do not constitute "byproduct material" for
the purpose of this subpart."

Source: 40 CFR 192.32 Definitions and Cross References and 40 CFR Part 61 Subpart W (40 CFR Part 61.251 Definitions) - https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-I/subchapter-F/part-192 and https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-I/subchapter-F/part-192 and

The EPA is also involved in the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended. The EPA has specific responsibilities under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended related to 11(e).2 byproduct material. The Act states:

Sec. 84. Authorities of Commission Respecting Certain Byproduct Material

- a. "The Commission shall insure that the management of any byproduct material, as defined in section 11e.(2), is carried out in such manner as-
 - (1) the Commission deems appropriate to protect the public health and safety and the environment from radiological and non-radiological hazards associated with the processing and with the possession and transfer of such material taking into account the risk to the public health, safety, and the environment, with due consideration of the economic costs and such other factors as the Commission determines to be appropriate, (2) conforms with applicable general standards promulgated by the Administration of the Environmental Protection Agency under section 275, and..."

Source: NUREG-0980 Vol. 1, No. 11 Nuclear Regulatory Legislation 113 Congress; 2nd Session https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1536/ML15364A497.pdf#page=23

Changes to definitions in the Act could impact the scope of these responsibilities.

Changes to definitions would also impact the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, (CERCLA) since both source and byproduct material are discussed in that Act. Section 101(22) of CERCLA excludes source, and byproduct material releases from uranium recovery (processing) sites

by definition. Changes to these definitions could jeopardize these exclusions. Specifically Federal Register / Volume 48, Number 175 / Thursday, September 8, 1983 / Rules and Regulations Amendment to National Oil and Hazardous Substance Contingency Plan; National Priorities List (https://semspub.epa.gov/work/01/297159.pdf) states:

Releases of Radioactive Materials

"Section 101(22) of CERCLA excludes several types of releases of radioactive materials from the statutory definition of "release." These releases are therefore not eligible for CERCLA response actions or inclusion on the NPL. The exclusions apply to:

- 1. releases of source, by-product or special nuclear material from a nuclear incident if these releases are subject to financial protection requirements under section 170 of the Atomic Energy Act, and
- 2. any release of source, by-product or special nuclear material from any processing site designated under the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978.

Accordingly, such radioactive releases have not been considered eligible for inclusion on the NPL. As a policy matter, EPA has also chosen not to list releases of source, by-product, or special nuclear material from any facility with a current license issued by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), on the grounds that the NRC has full authority to require cleanup of releases from such facilities. (Formerly licensed facilities whose licenses no longer are in effect will, however, be considered for listing.) Comments generally supported the position".

The DOE in its regulations, specifically 10 CFR Part 765 Reimbursement for Costs of Remedial Action at Active Uranium and Thorium Processing Sites includes a definition of byproduct material that states:

"Byproduct material means the tailings or wastes produced by the extraction or concentration of uranium or thorium from any ore processed primarily for its source material content."

Source: 10 CFR Part 765 Reimbursement for Costs of Remedial Action at Active Uranium and Thorium Processing Sites https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-10/part-765

Any proposed changes to these definitions in the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended would impact not only NRC regulations but EPA and DOE regulations as well.

Nexus to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the Definition of Waste Waste is defined by the NRC as:

"Waste means those low-level radioactive wastes containing source, special nuclear, or byproduct material that are acceptable for disposal in a land disposal facility. For the purposes of this definition, low-level radioactive waste means radioactive waste not classified as high-level radioactive waste, transuranic waste, spent nuclear fuel, or byproduct material as defined in paragraphs (2), (3), and (4) of the definition of Byproduct material set forth in § 20.1003 of this chapter."

Source: 10 CFR Part 61 - Licensing Requirements for Land Disposal of Radioactive Waste - https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-10/chapter-l/part-61

This definition specifically excludes byproduct material as currently defined in 10 CFR 20.1003. The definition in paragraph 2 is that of 11(e).2 byproduct material. Altering the definition of 11(e).2 byproduct material in the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended may impact how it is currently classified in 10 CFR Part 61.

40 CFR Subchapter I **defines** wastes as well and contains some exclusions as to what may be considered a waste. 40 CFR Part 261.2 – Definition of solid Waste defines solid waste as:

1) A **solid waste** is any discarded material that is not excluded under § 261.4(a) or that is not excluded by a variance granted under §§ 260.30 and 260.31 or that is not excluded by a non-waste determination under §§ 260.30 and 260.34.

Source: 40 CFR Part 261.2 – Definition of solid Waste - https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-l/subchapter-l/subpart-A/section-261.2

Certain materials are excluded from being solid wastes by regulation specifically 40 CFR Part 261.4 – Exclusions that lists:

"Source, special nuclear or by-product material as defined by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2011 et seq."

Source: 40 CFR Part 261.4 – Exclusions - https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-l/part-261

Changes to the definitions of these materials could impact this exclusion.

In addition, the Bevill Amendment as codified in part by 40 CFR Part 261.4(b)(7) excludes the following wastes from being classified as hazardous wastes:

"Solid waste from the extraction, beneficiation, and processing of ores and minerals (including coal, phosphate rock, and overburden from the mining of uranium ore), except as provided by § 266.112 of this chapter for facilities that burn or process hazardous waste."

Source: 40 CFR Part 261.4(b)(7) – Exclusions -https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-l/subchapter-l/part-261

Changes to the definitions in the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as amended could impact these important exclusions.

Specific impacts to certain activities permitted at licensed uranium recovery sites

Certain specific activities are permitted by the NRC at licensed uranium recovery sites that depend heavily on existing definitions. These activities are:

Alternate Feed Processing

- The processing of alternate feed is permitted and described in RIS 00-023: Recent Changes to Uranium Recovery Policy (https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/gen-comm/regissues/2000/ri00023.html) This document relies heavily upon the definition of 11(e).2 byproduct material stating:
 - "For the tailings and waste from the proposed processing to qualify as 11e.(2) byproduct material, the ore must be processed primarily for its source-material content. If the only product produced in the processing of the alternate feed is uranium product, this determination is satisfied. If, in addition to uranium product, another material is also produced in the processing of the ore, the licensee must provide documentation showing that the uranium product is the primary product produced.

If it can be determined, using the aforementioned guidance, that the proposed feed material meets the definition of ore, that it will not introduce a hazardous waste not otherwise exempted, or if it has been approved by the EPA (or State) and the long-term custodian, and that the primary purpose of its processing is for its source-material content, the request can be approved."

In addition, this single section of text in this Regulatory Issues Summary (RIS) incorporates three (3) potentially impacted definitions, source material, 11(e).2 byproduct material and ore.

Processing of Equivalent Feed at Licensed Uranium Recovery Facilities

- The processing of equivalent feed at licensed uranium recovery facilities is described in Regulatory Issue Summary 2012-06 NRC Policy Regarding Submittal of Amendments for Processing of Equivalent Feed at Licensed Uranium Recovery Facilities (https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1104/ML110470571.pdf). This guidance ties the definition of "equivalent feed" to source and 11(e).2 byproduct material stating:
 - "Consequently, in this guidance, the staff is defining the term "equivalent feed" to apply to those circumstances where the feed material is essentially the same chemically and physically as the source material that is normally processed at a uranium recovery facility. Such material should not to be considered as alternative feed requiring license amendments as described in RIS 00-23 if it meets the equivalent feed criteria articulated in this RIS. Equivalent feed can originate at a CWS or mine dewatering operation. In addition, equivalent feed can also include ULR originating from another licensed uranium recovery facility. However, it should be noted that processing of these ULRs for source material would need to occur before any waste would be considered as 11e.(2) byproduct material."

Definitional changes to the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended would impact existing guidance upon which the uranium recovery industry relies. The industry relies upon the fact that the tailings and waste from alternate feed processing qualifies as 11e.(2) byproduct material as defined in the Act.

Lack of need for any changes to definitions in the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended

Mechanisms already exist within the existing regulations to address items such as technology being developed by a Wyoming based company. The company describes its technology as follows:

"Waste reduction occurs by creating isolated mineral fraction and a clean coarse fraction that is an inert product of the remediated material. The isolated mineral fraction includes vanadium, source material, and other constituents of concern (e.g., RCRA metals). The isolated mineral fraction, which makes up approximately 15% of the volume of the remediated contaminated material, is transported offsite as alternate feed at a uranium recovery facility or for disposal at a licensed low-level radioactive waste facility. The clean coarse fraction can be left in place or used for other purposes onsite, such as filling or grading."

Source: Application for a Performance-Based, Multi-Site Radioactive Materials License to Operate a High-Pressure Slurry Ablation Remediation System Issuing Agency: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission - ADAMS Accession Number: ML22213A147 https://adamswebsearch2.nrc.gov/webSearch2/main.jsp?AccessionNumber=ML22213A147

The NRC has determined that the process produces 11(e).2 byproduct material stating:

"Based on (the) application, the proposed HPSA technology is an activity that produces byproduct material as it: (i) involves the concentration of uranium and/or thorium for the primary purpose of recovering the source material, (ii) from ore, and (iii) produces tailings or waste. The material is crushed, slurried, and pumped through the high-pressure nozzles."

Source: United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission Staff Regulatory And Acceptance Review of Disa Technologies' License Application for the Use of High-Pressure Slurry Ablation Technology (Docket No. 04038417) ADAMS Accession Number: ML22318A006 https://adamswebsearch2.nrc.gov/webSearch2/main.jsp?AccessionNumber=ML22318A006

The NRC has determined the "clean coarse fraction" to be 11(e).2 byproduct material when it states, "Finally, the HPSA technology produces tailings or waste, which is the clean coarse fraction resulting from the concentration of uranium and/or thorium from waste rock. For these reasons, as stated above, the NRC staff has determined

that Disa's application to utilize the HPSA technology is a form of uranium milling and is thus subject to 10 CFR Part 40, including Appendix A." (**Source:** United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission Staff Regulatory And Acceptance Review of Disa Technologies' License Application for the Use of High-Pressure Slurry Ablation Technology (Docket No. 04038417) Accession Number: ML22318A006 https://adamswebsearch2.nrc.gov/webSearch2/main.jsp?AccessionNumber=ML22318A006)

Given the fact that the company states that the "...clean coarse fraction can be left in place or used for other purposes onsite, such as filling or grading", and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is a risk informed agency (Please see: Risk-informed regulation which states, "An approach to regulation taken by the NRC, which incorporates an assessment of safety significance or relative risk. This approach ensures that the regulatory burden imposed by an individual regulation or process is appropriate to its importance in protecting the health and safety of the public and the environment. (https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/basic-ref/glossary/risk-informed-regulation.html)), the company can propose alternatives to manage the "clean coarse fraction" that is produced by the process.

Existing regulation, specifically 10 CFR Part 40 Appendix A allows for the proposal of alternatives when it states:

"Licensees or applicants may propose alternatives to the specific requirements in this appendix. The alternative proposals may take into account local or regional conditions, including geology, topography, hydrology, and meteorology. The Commission may find that the proposed alternatives meet the Commission's requirements if the alternatives will achieve a level of stabilization and containment of the sites concerned, and a level of protection for public health, safety, and the environment from radiological and nonradiological hazards associated with the sites, which is equivalent to, to the extent practicable, or more stringent than the level which would be achieved by the requirements of this Appendix and the standards promulgated by the Environmental Protection Agency in 40 CFR Part 192, Subparts D and E."

Source: Appendix A to Part 40—Criteria Relating to the Operation of Uranium Mills and the Disposition of Tailings or Wastes Produced by the Extraction or Concentration of Source Material From Ores Processed Primarily for Their Source Material Content – Introduction – (https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/cfr/part040/part040-appa.html)

The company can propose alternatives to resolve any issues regarding the"... clean coarse fraction resulting from the concentration of uranium and/or thorium from waste rock..." and in fact has been encouraged to do so by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) when it stated:

"As stated in Appendix A, the NRC can approve alternatives to the Appendix A criteria, provided that the proposed alternatives "achieve a level of stabilization and containment of the sites concerned, and a level of protection for public health, safety, and the environment from radiological and nonradiological hazards associated with the sites, which is equivalent to, to the extent practicable, or more stringent than the level which would be achieved by the requirements of this Appendix and the standards promulgated by the Environmental Protection Agency in 40 CFR Part 192, Subparts D and E."

Source: U.S. NRC November 29, 2022 *United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission Staff Regulatory and Acceptance Review of Disa Technologies' License Application for the Use of High-Pressure Slurry Ablation Technology (Docket No. 04038417)* ADAMS Accession Number: ML22318A006 https://adamswebsearch2.nrc.gov/webSearch2/main.jsp?AccessionNumber=ML22318A006

The simplest and easiest approach to resolve these issues would be for the company in question to follow the NRC's suggested path forward.

Conclusions:

Based upon the review of the UPA's letter and a review of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended, applicable NRC regulations, EPA regulations, and Regulatory Issues Summaries (RISs) the following can be concluded:

- Changes to definitions within the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended will force downstream changes
 to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, (CERCLA), and
 existing NRC, DOE and EPA regulations that will require substantial time, effort and public comment that
 may harm the uranium recovery industry.
- Changes would impact both alternate feed processing and the processing of equivalent feed at licensed uranium recovery facilities. These changes could also potentially impact groundwater restoration at in-situ uranium recovery operations as well. As per NRC Regulatory Issue Summary 2009-05 Uranium Recovery Policy Regarding: (1) The Process for Scheduling Licensing Reviews of Applications for New Uranium Recovery Facilities and (2) the Restoration of Groundwater at Licensed Uranium In Situ Recovery Facilities that states, "...the staff will apply the Criterion 5B standards in evaluating all ISR groundwater restoration plans currently under review or submitted in the future. This policy includes reviews of applications for new ISR facilities, reviews of restoration plans at existing, licensed ISR facilities, and reviews of ISR license renewal applications", groundwater restoration at in-situ uranium recovery operations currently falls under 10 CFR Part 40 Appendix A Criterion 5B which is part of 10 CFR Part 40 Domestic Licensing of Source Material. This regulation could be adversely impacted by definitional changes.
- The changes are unnecessary. Existing regulations and the fact that the NRC is a risk-informed agency are more than adequate to address any issues raised by the company's technology. In fact, the NRC has proposed a path forward for the company to follow in a letter dated November 29, 2022, which is both simpler and preferable to modifying definitions in the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended.

Thank you for your review and consideration of this letter, and your work for the people of Wyoming. If you have any questions or require further information you or your staff ma contact me directly at 307-286-5993.

Best regards,

Travis Deti Executive Director

References

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- Code of Federal Regulations 10 CFR Part 765 Reimbursement for Costs of Remedial Action at Active Uranium and Thorium Processing Sites https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-10/chapter-III/part-765
- Code of Federal Regulations 40 CFR Part 61 National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants - https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-I/subchapter-C/part-61
- Code of Federal Regulations 40 CFR Part 192 Health and Environmental Protection Standards for Uranium and Thorium Mill Tailings - https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-I/subchapter-F/part-192
- Code of Federal Regulations 40 CFR Part 261- Solid Wastes https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-l/subchapter-l
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